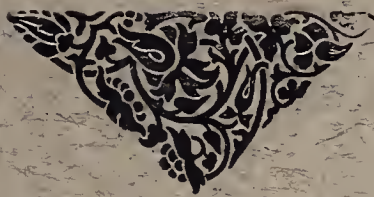

HAND BOOK *of* The
Pennsylvania
Free Library Commission



1912

HAND BOOK
OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA FREE LIBRARY
COMMISSION

HARRISBURG:
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1912.

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Address all communications to

PENNSYLVANIA FREE LIBRARY COMMISSION,

State Library,

Harrisburg, Pa.

Pennsylvania Free Library Commission.

The Pennsylvania Free Library Commission was established by an Act of Legislature approved May 6, 1899, which reads as follows:

AN ACT

To provide for the appointment of a Free Library Commission and to define its powers and duties.

Section 1. Be it enacted, &c., That the Governor shall appoint five persons who, with the State Librarian, shall constitute a Free Library Commission. Two of the members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed for a term of four years, and three of the members appointed by the Governor shall be appointed for a term of five years. All subsequent appointments shall be for a term of five years each, except the appointment to fill vacancies. The Commission shall elect a chairman. The State Librarian shall be ex-officio secretary of the Commission.

Section 2. The Commission shall give advice and counsel to all free libraries in the State, and to all communities which may propose to establish them, as to the best means of establishing and administering such libraries, the selection of books, cataloguing, and other details of library management. The Commission shall have all the powers of general supervision and inspection and the right of requiring reports which is vested in the State Librarian by section five of an act, entitled "An act for the establishment of free libraries in the several school districts of this Commonwealth, except in cities of the first and second class," approved the twenty-eighth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five. The Commission shall also establish and maintain out of such sums as shall come into their hands by appropriation or otherwise, a system of traveling libraries as far as possible throughout the Commonwealth.

Section 3. No member of the Commission shall receive any compensation for his services as a member.

Under the operation of the above law, the work of the Commission divides itself into two parts, that of supervising and encouraging the free library movement through the State, and that of maintaining a system of traveling libraries.

DIVISION OF WORK WITH FREE LIBRARIES.

Under the first division, the Commission aims to aid in the development of existing libraries to the highest point of efficiency. Visits are made to the various libraries of the State and the work of each is discussed with the librarian with reference to local conditions and needs.

The Commission is also ready to help in establishing new libraries and to aid in making free to the people the libraries supported by subscription, giving suggestions as to means of arousing interest in the subject and technical aid in establishing such work. Assistance is given in selecting books, cataloguing, organizing or any other part of the work.

Teachers who are forming a school library would find it profitable to call on the Commission before purchasing books.

The work of this division is under the supervision of a trained and experienced worker.

DIVISION OF TRAVELING LIBRARIES.

Under the second division a system of traveling libraries is maintained for the benefit of the people through the State. The primary idea of this work is that of encouraging the establishment of permanent libraries wherever it is possible. In many places, however, the situation is such as to make the establishment of a local library impossible, for the present at least, and in such places the work is carried on with the idea of providing the people of the community with the privileges of a free library.

WHAT IS A TRAVELING LIBRARY?

A traveling library is a small collection of books, varying in size according to the use to which it is to be put, which is loaned a certain period of time, at the end of which it is to be returned and if desired, another secured in its place. The character of these libraries depends upon the use for which they are intended, there being three lines of work in which they are of service.

FIRST: In the way of providing a free library for communities in which there is no such institution. For this purpose the libraries are made up of fifty well selected works in various classes of literature. The rule followed is to include twenty-five volumes of fiction and twenty-five volumes representing other classes, as history, biography, travel, science, etc. Among these are always included a fair proportion of books for the younger readers. These books are the best that can be secured. No effort is made to provide the latest book unless it is thought to be worth buying, but an effort is made to keep the literature up-to-date in the best sense. In receiving applications for libraries the Commission is glad to have suggestions from borrowers as to books which they would like to have included. There is no promise to include all such books, because that might be impossible, but the Commission will do its best to give the people what they ask for.

These books are for the free use of all responsible residents of the community, and must be loaned without charge.

They may be kept for six months, when they are to be returned and another library may be secured.

SECOND: There is a need on the part of study clubs and reading circles for literature covering the subjects which they are studying. The Commission is doing what it can to meet this need. Such organizations are invited to send their programmes to the Commission and reference libraries will be made up to cover the subjects. Such libraries do not necessarily include fifty volumes. The purpose is to include the books needed for the proper study of the subjects, hence the number will vary with the subjects under consideration. These libraries may be kept until June first when they must be returned.

THIRD: There are many people through the State, teachers, preachers, and others, who are interested in some particular line of study, but are so situated that they cannot secure the books needed for the proper study of such subjects. The Commission is ready to give what assistance it can to such individual students by lending them the books they need.

These collections will include not more than five works which may be kept three months, when they must be returned.

Efforts are also made to help schools and colleges by loaning books for special use.

HOW TO SECURE A TRAVELING LIBRARY.

Application must be made on forms which will be supplied by the Commission on request. The following samples show the forms now in use. These forms may be changed at any time by the Commission.

Collections for Use as Free Libraries.

If a library is desired for the general use of the community, the following steps should be taken: Twelve taxpayers will sign the following application:

The undersigned, resident taxpayers of, in, County, in which there is no free public library, hereby apply to the Pennsylvania Free Library Commission for the loan of a traveling library for the use of our people.

We agree to circulate the books according to the rules of said commission, to return them at the end of six months and make good any loss or damage beyond reasonable wear and tear.

The librarian appointed by the applicants will sign the following agreement:

As Librarian of Traveling Library when loaned to..... by the Pennsylvania Free Library Commission, I hereby agree to care properly for the books under my control, to circulate them in accordance with the rules of the Pennsylvania Free Library Commission and to make any required reports respecting their use.

.....Librarian.

Dated at
P. O. address of Librarian.

These papers will then be forwarded to the Commission with a fee of one dollar to cover transportation charges, and if everything is satisfactory a library will be sent as soon as possible. This dollar will be the only expense in securing a library unless there are purely local expenses for cartage, etc.

Study Club Libraries.

If a study club or reading circle desires books for use in connection with its work the mode of procedure will be as follows: The club will authorize the President and Secretary to sign the following application:

We, the undersigned officers of, of, Pennsylvania, in which there is no free library, having been duly authorized at a meeting held on..... hereby apply to the Pennsylvania Free Library Commission for the loan of a collection of works on the subjects of study to be followed by the club.

We agree to follow the rules of the said Commission, to return the books not later than June 1, and make good any loss or damage beyond reasonable wear and tear.

Dated at,President.
P. O. address of Secretary.
.....191Secretary.

The librarian will sign the same form of agreement as in the case of general collections, and the expense will be the same.

Individual Libraries.

Individuals desiring to secure books for private use will sign the following application and get a real estate owner to endorse it, according to the form appended:

Being a resident of....., County of....., Penna., I hereby apply to the Free Library Commission of Pennsylvania, for the loan of books which will enable me to pursue my studies.

I agree to pay all transportation charges, to use the books carefully and return them safely at the end of three months, unless notified of permission to keep them longer; to make good any loss or damage, beyond reasonable wear and tear, however occurring, while they are in my possession.

Signed.....

Being the owner of real estate to the amount of three hundred dollars, I endorse the above application and agree to reimburse the Free Library Commission of Pennsylvania for any failure to comply with the above conditions.

Signed.....

LOCATION OF LIBRARY.

The books should be placed where they will be accessible to the largest number of people. The post-office or general store make the best place, but frequently a private house will be better.

In rural districts the public school may be the best location, but experience shows that when the books are placed in a school building only those connected with the school use them. The Commission, therefore, prefers to have them located elsewhere.

HOW TO CHARGE LOANS.

The books are packed in small oak cases, about 24 inches high and 36 inches wide, with doors which can be locked. There is also a small cabinet in which can be kept the cards used in keeping a record of loans.

Everything necessary to keep this record will be found in the cabinet. There is a blank book with an agreement at the top which should be signed by each borrower. The lines may be numbered and the borrower known by the number of the line on which is the signature, or, the borrower's name may be used.

There is also a blue card on which the borrower's name and number are to be written. Each borrower should be represented by a blue card. These cards should always be kept in the little cabinet.

In the back of each book will be found a white card bearing the author and title of the book. This card should always be in the book while it is on the shelf.

When a book is loaned, take the white card from the pocket and in the first column write the date and in the second the name or number of the borrower. At the same time write the date in the first column of the borrower's (blue) card, then file these in the cabinet.

Thus each book out is represented by a white card in the cabinet and a glance at any card will tell who has the book to which it belongs and when it should be returned.

When the book is returned, put its white card back into the pocket and write the date in the second column of the borrowers's card.

If there is any difficulty in keeping this record or in any other part of the work, do not hesitate to write to the Commission. They are anxious that the work should succeed and will give any aid possible.

HOW TO EXCHANGE LIBRARIES.

In making an exchange of libraries, the best plan to follow is to ask for a new collection just before the time of the old collection expires. This request should be accompanied by the fee for transportation. The new library will be sent in a small box and on its receipt the old collection can be packed in the same box and returned. Do not return the book case until the work is to be given up.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The purpose of the traveling libraries being to provide books for the rural districts and places too small to maintain libraries of their own, the Commission has decided not to send them to towns of over one thousand population except to assist in establishing a local library, or to aid a study club in its work.

No books will be loaned in a town where there is a free library except through that institution. In such a case the application should come from the library.

In communities where there are two or more parties who wish books from the Commission, arrangements must be made by which all correspondence can be carried on with one person and the books kept in one place.

The books are to be free to any resident of the community who will sign an agreement to obey the rules and pay promptly any penalties imposed for damaging or losing books and keeping them out over the regulation time. Those who refuse to obey the rules may be deprived of the use of the books.

Everyone in the community should be kept informed of the presence of the books and that they are at liberty to use them.

The library should be opened as frequently as possible. Twice a week is the least which should be thought of under ordinary circumstances.

The librarian should be pleasant in meeting those who come to the library and make the patrons feel that they are really wanted.

The signers of the application may make rules defining the limits beyond which books shall not be loaned, the number of books any one borrower may have at one time, and the length of time for books may be kept.

A fine of one cent a day for over-detention of books produces sufficient revenue in some places to pay the fee.

The dollar fee is in no sense a charge for the use of the books. It takes the place of the transportation charges and is intended to equalize the cost of the work in all parts of the State.

Books are not considered injured "beyond reasonable wear" when binding or leaves are loose, worn or soiled by use; but books returned after having been wet, torn, gnawed, marked with pen or pencil, daubed with paint or sticky substances, with book plates or pockets marked or torn, or with leaves or illustrations missing are considered injured beyond reasonable wear, and the responsible party must pay the damage assessed by the Secretary of the Commission. Books with loose leaves should be returned to the Secretary at once for rebinding.